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ABSTRACT

This report of findings is designed as an initial sketch of some of the political attitudes and values of American High School Seniors at a particular point in historical time and at a single stage in their political development. In the spring of 1965 a national probability sample of 1669 high school seniors at 97 high schools were interviewed in-depth; a random sample of their parents, social studies teachers, and school principals were also interviewed. In addition, all members of the senior class in a majority of the schools completed an abbreviated self-administered questionnaire. Through 1968 the data were examined to determine political orientation as well as to assess the relative impact of family, school, and community on political learning. Part I of the report examines the sample to determine: 1) the breadth of the social studies curriculum in American High Schools; and, 2) the extent and sources of variability in course exposure and impact. Part II presents a political portrait of the students in the individual schools and compares them with those of students in the nation as a whole. The national sample is divided into two sets of sub-groups to examine the differences among students: 1) located in different regions of the country; and, 2) having different educational aspirations. (Author/SBE)

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LEARNING ABOUT POLITICS IN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOLS

A Progress Report on a National Survey

Survey Research Center
Institute for Social Research
The University of Michigan

SP001867

by
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and
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September, 1968

INTRODUCTION:

In the Spring of 1965 your school and 96 other high schools throughout the United States participated in the Survey Research Center's study of the political orientations of high school seniors. With your cooperation we interviewed a random sample of students, their parents, social studies teachers, and school principals. In addition, all members of the senior class in a majority of the schools completed an abbreviated self-administered questionnaire.

During the past three years these data have been carefully examined to determine the nature of various political values and attitudes of high school youth as well as to assess the relative impact of family, school, and community on the political learning of the child. Some time ago you received an initial summary of the study findings. At this time we wish to present some of the more specific findings of relevance to educators. We had planned to deliver this report at an earlier date. Unfortunately, difficulties with the data processing operations, and a lack of sufficient funds delayed the preparation.

The following report is in two parts. Part I examines the 97 schools in our sample to determine (1) the breadth of the social studies curriculum in American high schools and (2) the extent and sources of variability in course exposure and impact.

Part II presents a political portrait of certain political orientations of the high school seniors in your school and compares their orientations with those of students in the nation as a whole. In addition we shall divide the national sample into two sets of sub-groups to examine the differences among students (a) located in different regions of the country and (b) among students having different educational aspirations.

PART I: POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The findings reported in this section are based on the in-depth interviews of the national probability sample of 1669 high school seniors and on information gathered simultaneously about the schools included in the study. Our particular interest in social studies courses stems from their explicit emphasis on the teaching of political norms and other vital aspects of civic education. While civic education undoubtedly occurs in non-social studies courses, to say nothing of the extracurricular elements of the school environment, the major direct source of formal civic education is centered in the social studies curriculum.

I-1. Student Exposure to the Social Studies

Our initial concern is to determine both the breadth of the social studies curriculum and the extent of student exposure to these courses; that is, the number and type of courses each student takes. During our interviews with the twelfth graders, each student was asked to indicate which social studies courses he had actually taken during grades 10-12. We allocated these courses into ten broad categories, as shown in Table 1.

Most of the categories are self-explanatory but two need elaboration. American Problems includes the familiar Problems of Democracy course plus such occasional titles as Contemporary Problems, Social Problems, and Problems of American Life. Specialized World History embraces course titles outside the standard world history courses such as European History, Asian History, and World Cultures. While a course title is not a foolproof guide to the content of the course, there appears to be a general symmetry between course titles and the type of textbooks employed and topics covered.

Table 1

A Comparison of Social Studies Offerings versus Exposures during Grades 10-12, for a National Sample of High School Seniors

Course	Percent Attending A School Offering Course (N = 1927)[a]	Percent Who Have Taken Course (N = 1927)
American History	98%	98%
World History (general)	80	53
American Government	62	43
Economics	65	30
American Problems	42	27
World History (specialized)	31	16
Sociology	30	12
Geography	30	06
Psychology	16	06
International and Comparative Politics	13	05

[a]The N (number of respondents) is weighted to deal with the unavoidable problem of constructing a sampling frame based on varying degrees of precise school enrollment figures. This N also excludes the 107 students for whom no parent interview was obtained. Their inclusion would scarcely affect any of the figures for this and succeeding tables in this section.

Table 1 contains two types of information about social studies in the United States. The first column indicates the percentage of seniors attending schools where the various courses were part of the curriculum, either as a requirement or elective. Laid against these offerings are the percentages of students who had actually taken such courses (column 2). It is a rare student who gains his diploma without an encounter with American History. Beyond this subject, however, coverage is considerably less comprehensive, with World History, American Government-American Problems, and Economics exhibiting moderate strength. Sociology, though christened as the queen of the social sciences, is still seldom found in the high school student's repertory. This is even more true of Psychology--by all odds the largest of the behavioral sciences at the professional and academic level. What emphasis contemporary students receive on international relations and world politics must come through other courses, for there are precious few students taking (or having the opportunity to take) courses which emphasize this subject matter. The low percentage for Geography is primarily a function of the fact that most students now take Geography during either the eighth or ninth grades.

In sum, what the high school student of the mid-60's was receiving in the way of social studies bore the heavy imprint of the traditional pattern. Whereas the college curriculum during the past decades has been heavily infiltrated by the behavioral sciences, the secondary schools have responded only very slowly to changing intellectual and practical interests. For the student going on to college, this gap may not be crucial because it can be bridged during the college years. Of more concern are those not going further and those who have already left school. In essence, the

dominant type of "social science" they will have had is History and American Government. Although trend data are not handy, it does appear that the classic configuration of course exposure is beginning to erode. And it is likely that the traditional courses are undergoing alteration, though surely not rapidly or vigorously enough to suit the critics of the traditional curriculum and the proponents of the "new" social studies.

Another way of approaching the question of exposure to social studies courses is to look at the actual number of courses taken by the students. Overall the mean for our seniors was 3.08 courses, and the mode was three courses (bottom row, Table 2). Clearly one cannot charge the American educational system with restricting the absolute quantity of social studies. A question of immediate interest is whether there are any specifications that are associated with differential course exposure. For example, do students in different parts of the country, in different types of schools, or from diverse families consume a heavier diet of social studies?

A number of prominent individual and school characteristics are crossed against course exposure in Table 2. There are, without question, some moderate differences. Students who happened to be living in the West and Midwest received a heavier dose than those living in the Northeast and South.[1] In fact these regional differences are the most marked of all those presented.

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[1]The states making up each region in the continental United States are as follows: (1) West consists of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, California, Oregon, Washington; (2) South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Washington D.C., West Virginia; (3) Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota; (4) Northeast: Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Delaware, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania.

Quantity also increased according to the degree of metropolitanism in which the school was located,[2] in public versus nonpublic schools, and in schools with narrower grade spans and larger senior class sizes (latter not shown). The academic quality of the school, as measured by the proportion of students enrolled in college preparatory programs, bears a curvilinear relationship to the course exposure; while the mean is lowest among the students in the least academic schools--and rises at the next two brackets--it tapers off among students in the top category. Using mother's education as an indicator of social status suggests that the volume of social studies is not appreciably affected by status backgrounds. As suspected, the rates are virtually identical for male and female students, and differences between whites and non-whites are also small.

Numerous factors account for these various patterns. They are bound up in reasons of state requirements, available resources, professional norms, and intellectual history, to name only a few. What is significant in terms of civic education is that accidents of location, over which the student has no control, do make a difference in his exposure to subject matter designed to shape him as a citizen. It is also apparent that school systems in certain locations and having certain properties assign different priorities. Whether varying amounts of social studies actually "make a difference" is not at issue here. The central point is that the potential for exerting a greater influence on the teaching of political norms and values to the young is differentially distributed.

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[2]We shall use three classifications based on the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) to differentiate the degree of metropolitanism : (1) large SMSA, (2) medium SMSA, and (3) non-SMSA. An SMSA classification differentiates communities according to (a) their actual size or proximity to dense and large population areas; and (b) degree to which their labor force is engaged in non-agricultural occupations. The large SMSA's consist of the twelve largest ones in the United States.

Table 2

Number of Social Studies Courses Taken in Grades 10-12 by a National Sample of High School Seniors, by Individual and School Characteristics

Characteristics	Number of Courses Taken 0-2	3	4+	Mean	N
	%	%	%		
Region					
West	15	47	38	3.39	(330)
Midwest	25	39	36	3.29	(585)
Northeast	27	49	25	3.02	(464)
South	40	44	16	2.64	(548)
SMSA Type[a]					
Large	26	36	38	3.69	(449)
Medium	31	38	30	3.06	(662)
Non-SMSA	27	53	20	2.99	(816)
Type of School					
Public	26	46	28	3.10	(1728)
Nonpublic	43	29	27	2.90	(199)
Span of Grades					
10-12	20	40	39	3.28	(545)
9-12	26	41	37	3.21	(693)
8-12+	36	50	14	2.76	(690)
Proportion College Prep					
60%+	29	39	32	3.08	(538)
50-59%	25	34	41	3.28	(391)
30-49%	24	50	24	3.05	(563)
0-29%	31	52	17	2.92	(435)
Mother's Education					
Elementary	26	50	24	3.03	(423)
Some High School	30	44	26	3.00	(358)
High School Grad	24	43	32	3.18	(512)
Some College or more	34	36	30	3.03	(455)
Sex					
Male	27	44	29	3.08	(995)
Female	29	44	27	3.05	(932)
Race					
White	29	43	28	3.06	(1728)
Negro	17	56	27	3.22	(199)
Grand Total	28	44	28	3.08	(1927)

[a]Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

To this stage we have dealt with all the social studies. Since our focal interest is on the political development of high school seniors, we shall examine in particular factors related to exposure in the American Government-American Problems area. Although we recognize that important political values and skills are often acquired in other social studies courses, we feel that the American Government and Problems courses--the classic "civic education" courses--are more directly oriented toward achieving these goals.

Schools offering American Government usually do not offer a Problems course, and vice versa. Whereas the American Government courses focus heavily on the forms, structures, backgrounds, and traditions of American political life, the Problems courses emphasize a wider scope of socio-political activities, are more contemporary in nature, and are typically organized around major problems in American public life. Because of the different emphases and formats of the two courses, we expect that they will have differential effects.

What is the incidence of these courses among high school seniors? Altogether 68% of the students had taken one or the other, with 43% having had an American Government course and 27% a Problems course. As in the case of the total number of social studies courses there are also differences in the degree of exposure to civics courses. Perhaps the most striking variations are by region and metropolitanism (Table 3, column 3). Great majorities of the students in the West and Midwest, about two-thirds of the Southerners, but slightly under two-fifths of the Northeastern residents had experienced such a course. Similarly there is an inverse relationship between the metropolitan configuration and course exposure--the more metropolitan the area the less likely the student will have taken

Table 3

Proportion of Students Who Have Taken American Government, American Problems, or Either During Grades 10-12, by Individual and School Characteristics

Characteristic	Percent Taking: American Government	American Problems	Either One[a]	N
	%	%	%	
Region				
West	53	38	88	(330)
Midwest	58	34	85	(585)
South	52	11	65	(548)
Northeast	07	30	37	(464)
SMSA Type[b]				
Non-SMSA	47	30	75	(816)
Medium	48	20	67	(662)
Large	30	34	56	(449)
Type of School				
Public	46	25	68	(1728)
Nonpublic	25	44	65	(199)
Span of Grades				
10-12	48	30	71	(545)
9-12	38	26	64	(693)
8-12+	46	27	70	(690)
Proportion College Prep				
60%+	46	13	58	(538)
50-59%	40	42	78	(391)
30-49%	42	34	72	(563)
0-29%	45	23	66	(435)
Mother's Education				
Elementary	46	26	70	(423)
Some High School	40	31	69	(358)
High School Grad	46	29	72	(512)
Some College or more	39	24	61	(455)
Sex				
Male	44	25	67	(995)
Female	43	29	69	(932)
Race				
White	42	29	68	(1728)
Negro	51	14	63	(199)
Grand Total	43	27	68	(1927)

[a]Includes a very small proportion taking esoteric civics courses in addition to or instead of American Government and American Problems.

[b]Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

the course. Beyond these spatial characteristics the only other distributions in Table 3 showing much discrimination are those dealing with the academic calibre of the school (in terms of college prep proportions). Students in schools at each extreme less frequently took a civics course than those in the middle ranges.

Disguised in the overall frequencies are some contrasts between taking American Government versus American Problems (Table 3, columns 1 and 2). For example, Southern students took the Government course over the Problems course at a ratio of about 5:1. Northeastern students, by contrast, were much more exposed to the Problems than to the Government course, the ratio being about 4:1. Similarly, public school pupils more often found themselves in American Government whereas the nonpublic students were more frequently in American Problems. A final illustration is that Negro students--primarily because of their concentration in the South--had the Government course more often than did Whites, even though Whites had a slightly higher overall rate of exposure.

One important conclusion to be drawn from these data is that even though two-thirds of all students have taken a civics course during their last three years of high school, the probability of such exposure is not randomly spread throughout the country. Region, as a summarizing variable, appears to be the most determinate factor. Since civics courses tend to be required if present in the school curriculum, one must assume that the regional variations are functions of state and school system practices rather than being indicative of any special passion for or against the courses on the part of students.

I-2. The Effects of Civic Education

Now that the distribution of civics exposure has been described we can turn to the crucial question of their impact. That is, are a student's political values, cognitions, and skills affected by course exposure. In selecting the particular political orientations to be analyzed we attempted to touch on many of the consistent themes in the civics literature. Rather than examine only one or two variables, we considered a wide variety so that the possible differences in effects might be uncovered.[3]

1. Political knowledge and sophistication.--For better or worse, performance on factual examinations is a prime way in which the success of a course and teacher is evaluated. Students were asked six questions dealing with recent and contemporary political events and personalities. Another measure, touching more directly on political sophistication, ascertained the students' perception of ideological differences between political parties.

2. Political interest.--A hallmark of the "shoulds" of political education in the United States is the shaping of citizens to take an active interest in political affairs. Although numerous studies of adults suggest that the schools and other socializing agents fall short of the goals envisioned by the authors of civics textbooks, it is nevertheless possible that these achievements would be even less impressive in the

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[3]The next few pages represent an abridgement and some revision of work originally found in Langton and Jennings (1968).

2. (continued)

absence of intensive inculcation in the civics courses. Among many alternative measures of interest available in the interview protocols, we relied on the answers to a straightforward inquiry.

3. Spectator politicization.--A more direct measure of interest in political matters is the degree to which students consume political content in the mass media. If the civics curriculum spurs an interest in politics, it should be reflected in greater media consumption. Separate soundings were taken of the students' behavior vis-a-vis television, newspapers, and magazines.

4. Political discourse.--Even more dramatic evidence of the success of the civics experience would be an upsurge in the pre-adult's level of politically-tinged dialogue. In view of the fact that there are relatively few ways in which the high school senior can (or does) assume active political roles, the frequency of political conversations is not an improbable surrogate for forms of adult-level political activity. For our purposes the student's report of the frequency with which he discusses politics with his peers was used.

5. Political efficacy.--The belief that one can affect political outcomes is a vital element of political behavior, and grade school inquiries have demonstrated the rising sense of efficacy as the child progresses through

5. (continued)

elementary school. Much of civic education's thrust is toward developing a sense of civic competence. Efficacy was measured by the students' responses to two items.

6. Political cynicism.--While trying to create interest in politics and a sense of efficacy, the civics curriculum almost inevitably tries to discourage feelings of mistrust and cynicism toward the government. Indeed, cynicism seems in part to be antithetical to a feeling of civic competence. A six-item scale was used to arrange the students on a political cynicism dimension.

7. Civic tolerance.--Considerable discussion exists in the citizenship literature on the necessity for inculcating norms of civic tolerance. Even though the curriculum materials and the teachers often fail to grapple with the complexities of these norms, a proper and necessary role of civics courses is seen as creating support for the "Bill of Rights," due process, freedom of speech, recognition of legitimate diversity, and so forth. In order to probe the effect of exposure to civics courses on these types of beliefs, a three-item civic tolerance scale was devised.

8. Participative orientation.--Instilling a propensity toward participation in public life becomes especially evident as a civic education goal as the preadult approaches legal age. In particular, one might

8. (continued)

hypothesize that the participation ethic would displace a more basic and early-formed orientation such as loyalty to country. Responses to an open-ended question tapping the students' view of the "good citizen" form the basis of the participative-orientation measure.

One of the first points to be established in the analysis was that scant differences emerged as a consequence of whether the student had taken a more traditional American Government course or the more topically-oriented, wider ranging American Problems course. Aside from rather meager differences, students taking the two major types of courses were virtually indistinguishable in terms of their political orientations. Knowing this, we proceeded with some confidence to treat them (and those taking a sprinkling of other courses) together and to focus our analysis primarily on the amount of exposure, viz., none, one, or two courses during grades 10-12.

An overview of the results offers strikingly little support for the impact of the curriculum. It is true that the direction of the findings generally agrees with the predictions advanced above. That is, the more civics courses the student has had the more likely he was to be knowledgeable, to be interested in politics, to expose himself to the political content of the mass media, to have more political discourse, to feel more efficacious, to espouse a participative (versus loyalty) orientation, and to show more civic tolerance. The possible exception to the pattern was the curvilinear relationship between course-taking and political cynicism. Thus, the claims made for the importance of the civic

education courses in the senior high school are vindicated if one considers only the direction of the results.

However, it is perfectly obvious from the size of the correlations that the magnitude of the relationships are extremely weak, in most instances bordering on the trivial.[4] Typical of this general pattern of relationships is that between the number of civic education courses taken and the degree of political interest.

Cross Tabulation of Number of Civics Courses by Degree of Political Interest

Number of Civics Courses Taken	Degree of Political Interest				
	High	Medium	Low	%	N
None	39.5	39.1	21.4	100	(617)
One	42.1	43.3	14.6	100	(1137)
Two	42.4	44.4	13.2	100	(173)

While political interest tends to increase with an increase in the number of civics courses taken, the relationship is quite small. This and similar findings serve as evidence for the critics' contention that course taking among older adolescents results in only incremental changes in political orientations. Indeed, in all cases, the increments were so minuscule as to raise serious questions about the utility of investing in government courses in the senior high school, at least as these courses are presently constituted.

Do these findings mean that the political orientations of pre-adults are essentially unchangeable during the secondary school years? This possibility cannot be easily dismissed. Certainly the pre-high

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[4]Two forms of analysis were used--1) contingency tables and 2) multiple classification analysis, a technique having some properties of both multiple regression and analysis of variance techniques but not requiring linearity of regression.

schooler has already undergone, especially in the American context, several years of intensive formal and informal political socialization. He may have developed, by the time he reaches secondary school, a resistance to further formal socialization at this stage in his life cycle.

But there is also an alternative or additional explanation. If the course work represents information redundancy, there is little reason to expect even modest alterations. By redundancy we mean not only repetition of previous instruction, though there is surely a surfeit of that. We mean also redundancy in the sense of duplicating cues from other information sources, particularly the mass media, formal organizations, and primary groups. Students not taking civics courses are probably exposed to these other sources in approximately the same doses as those enrolled in the courses. Assuming that this is the case, and that the courses provide relatively few new inputs, the consequence would be lack of differentiation between course takers and non-course takers.

It is certainly conceivable that these generally depressing findings would not hold for some portions of the high school senior population. For example, one might expect that a positive association between course exposure and political knowledge would be found only among students from less educated and less politicized families. This "sponge" theory maintains that children from more deprived families are less likely to be saturated with political knowledge and interest in the family environment; therefore, they are more likely to be affected by the civics curriculum when they enter high school. The counter-hypothesis is that it is the child from the more highly educated families who is most likely to have developed the minimal learning skills and sensitivity to politics which would allow him to respond to civics instruction.

Clearly, a number of other factors could affect the impact of the civics courses. Therefore, we performed our analysis while controlling for a number of variables of theoretical and practical interest. These included the quality of the school, the student's academic ability, number of history courses taken, sex, parental education, and parental politicization, and the student's basic interest in politics and public affairs. Without going into detail on the results, it is sufficient to say that the original simple relationships between civics exposure and the various political orientations were seldom altered. That is, regardless of the particular types of students being considered, the effects of course-taking were persistently negligible. On the assumption that other social studies courses might be related to differing political orientations, we divided the students according to the sheer number of all social studies courses to which they had been exposed in grades 10-12. Again, the results revealed only a particle of difference amongst the students so divided.

For these reasons it would be well to look at courses and teachers which do not generate information redundancy. That is the virtue of examining the finer grain of teacher performance and course content. Another strategy, and one which we adopted would be to look at subpopulations of pre-adults in general. Less redundancy could be occasioned either by infusion of new information where relatively little existed before, or by information which conflicts with information coming from other sources.

Among the universe of subpopulations one could utilize, none is as distinctive perhaps as that of the Negro minority. The unique situation of Negroes in American social and political life and the dynamics now at work have been well-documented. Because of cultural differences between the

White majority and the Negro minority, the frequent exclusion of Negroes from socio-political life, the contemporary civil rights ferment, and the less privileged position of Negroes in our society, it seems likely that information redundancy would occur less often among the Negro pre-adults.

When White and Negro students were observed separately, it became clear that the curriculum exerted considerably more influence on the latter. On several measures the effect was to move the Negro youths--especially those from less-educated families--to a position more congruent with the White youths and more in consonance with the usual goals of civic education in the United States. With respect to some quasi-participative measures, taking a civics course served to depress their performance, especially those from better-educated families. In virtually all instances the Negro students were much more affected by taking such courses than were the Whites, regardless of whether the results were positive or negative.

One explanation of the singular consequence of the curriculum upon Negro students is that information redundancy is lower for them than for White students. Because of cultural and social status differences, the Negro students are more likely to encounter new or conflicting perspectives and content. The more usual case for Whites is a further layering of familiar materials which, by and large, repeat the message from other past and contemporary sources. It is conceivable that other subpopulations of students are affected differently by the curriculum; that variations in content and pedagogy lead to varying outcomes; or that there will be delayed consequences from course exposure.

In the main one is hard pressed to find evidence of any immediate course impact on the bulk of the students. The programmatic implications of this conclusion are forceful. If the educational system continues to invest sizable resources in government and civics courses at the secondary level--as seems most probable--there must be a radical restructuring of these courses in order for them to have any appreciable pay-off. Changes in goals, course content, pedagogical methods, timing of exposure, teacher training, and school environmental factors are all points of leverage. Until such changes come about, one must continue to expect little contribution from the formal civics curriculum in the political socialization of American pre-adults.

PART II: A PORTRAIT OF YOUR SCHOOL

Having explored the breadth and apparent impact of the social studies the civics curriculum in American high schools, we shall now examine some of the results derived from the self-administered questionnaires. Nearly 21,000 students in 77 of the 97 schools that composed the original sample completed this questionnaire. We shall utilize this information to sketch a three-dimensional portrait of the political orientations of high school seniors. These include the students' emotional ties to the political system, its institutions, and its actors; their procedural orientations to the world of politics; and their substantive orientations to American political parties and to the nation. In each of the following tables our aim is to provide three comparative baselines with which you may evaluate the findings for your high school's senior class in 1965. The first comparative baseline is the distribution for high school seniors throughout the nation. A second baseline is the distribution for high school seniors in the four major regions of the United States (see footnote on page 5 for the states making up each region). A final comparison differentiates students according to their personal educational goals: (a) those planning to attend a four year college; (b) those anticipating attendance at a two year college; (c) those expecting to further their education in business or trade school; and (d) those planning to enter the workaday world immediately after high school graduation.

This last baseline not only describes the probable direction of a student's activity during the first few years following departure from high school, but also reflects such factors as his intelligence, achievement orientation, socioeconomic status, and perhaps most important for

this analysis, the formal educational curriculum he experienced during his years in high school. Any or all of these factors, however, may be simultaneously summarized in our measure of interstudent differences and we cannot be certain that one is more prevalent than another. There is, in addition, a modest difference between males and females, with the former having higher educational aspirations and goals than females. To evaluate better the distribution of the various types of educational goals in your school, Table 4 gives the percentage of students in your school in each of the four categories as well as the distributions for the nation and the four regions.

Table 4

Educational Plans of High School Seniors

	Four Year College	Junior College	Business or Trade School	None	%
Nation	41.6	18.8	18.2	21.4	100
Region					
West	26.7	46.0	13.0	14.3	100
Midwest	49.1	8.0	20.2	22.6	100
Northeast	38.9	13.2	20.3	27.6	100
South	45.0	19.2	17.1	18.7	100
Your School					

It should be noted that the generalizing of our findings to all 18 year-olds in the United States, in a particular region, or in a particular category of educational plans must be cautious for two reasons. First, while schools included in this analysis are of widely varying size, location and academic quality, the sample is based on only 77 of the initial 97 schools in the sample and large metropolitan schools are slightly underrepresented. A second reservation is that respondents do not include adolescents who dropped out of school before entering the 12th grade.

Over three-fourths of the members in virtually all senior classes completed the questionnaire. The number of respondents in each region is as follows: 4431 (21.3) in West; 6011 (28.9) in the Midwest; 5010 (24.0) in the Northeast; and 5381 (25.8) in the South. Of those responding to the question about educational plans (607 failed to answer the question), 8135 plan to attend a four year college, 4141 plan to attend a two year college, 3680 expect to attend a business or a trade school, and 4270 do not plan to continue their education.

II-1. Politically Relevant Affective Attachments of High School Seniors.

a. Affective Orientation to the Political System as a Whole

What is the emotional orientation of high school seniors toward American government and politics? Most respondents tend to feel positively attached to the political system and its institutions and actors. Table 5 demonstrates that when asked to react to the statement, "The American system of government is the kind that all countries should have," three-fifths agree.

Table 5

All Countries Should Have the American System of Government

	Agree	Disagree	%
Nation	60.2	39.8	100
Region			
West	54.9	45.1	100
Midwest	58.2	41.8	100
Northeast	61.4	38.6	100
South	64.8	35.2	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	47.5	52.5	100
2 yr college	58.7	41.3	100
Trade School	72.6	27.4	100
No School	73.0	27.0	100
Your School			

In this and the following tables, no interpretation will be offered regarding the findings for your particular school. It is not to be implied that we regard the school as wholly or perhaps even partially responsible for the distributions found in the tables presented. Determination of cause-effect patterns awaits additional and more complex analysis of the data collected.

The findings in Table 5 may be greeted with either pleasure or dismay. If slightly more than 60% agree, almost 40% disagree. Does this mean that a sizable portion of the population under consideration are disenchanted with the American political system? Probably not, for while

agreement with the statement requires a positive evaluation of the American political process, it demands that those who agree also support the imposition of our institutions in varied and often inappropriate social contexts. That 60% of the students agree with the statement despite its ambiguity reflects a relatively high degree of satisfaction with the undifferentiated political system.

The frequency of agreement never drops below 54% in any of the regional divisions of the country. Quite clearly, however, the college bound student is much less likely to agree with this statement than the non-college bound. He seems to better understand the implications of the question and perhaps, at the same time, exercises more critical evaluation of his political and social environment.

Does a generalized support for the American system of government reflect a belief that the government is responsive to the will of the people? Two items in the questionnaire were designed to answer this question. First, students were asked:

> Would you say that the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?

The vast majority of the students, regardless of the region in which their school is located or their different educational plans, feel that the government is run for the benefit of all. (See Table 6)

However, when students were asked how much attention they believe the government pays to public opinion in making its decisions, only two-fifths of the national sample responded "quite a bit." This, of course, does not contradict the finding in Table 6 that almost twice as many

Table 6

For Whom Is the Government Run?

	The Benefit of All	For a Few Big Interests	%
Nation	77.2	22.8	100
Region			
West	75.4	24.6	100
Midwest	79.2	20.8	100
Northeast	80.4	19.6	100
South	73.0	27.0	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	78.1	21.9	100
2 yr college	76.8	23.2	100
Trade School	75.0	25.0	100
No School	77.1	22.9	100
Your School			

believe that the government acts for the benefit of all, since the government could act on what it believes are the interests of the many and still not heed the demands of public opinion.

Regional differences are small, but it appears that those anticipating college attendance are more convinced than others that the government is sensitive to the wishes of public opinion. Despite this difference, fewer than 20% of the students--regardless of the region in which their school is located or their personal educational goals--feel that government regularly disregards public opinion. (See Table 7)

Table 7

How Much Does the Government Listen to Public Opinion?[a]

	Quite A Bit	Some	Not Much	%
Nation	40.3	48.0	11.7	100
Region				
West	41.6	47.4	11.0	100
Midwest	43.0	46.5	10.4	100
Northeast	39.1	49.6	11.4	100
South	37.5	48.0	14.4	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	45.7	45.4	8.9	100
2 yr college	41.5	47.8	10.7	100
Trade School	34.4	49.7	15.9	100
No School	34.6	50.9	14.5	100
Your School				

[a]The question asked was: Over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what the people think when it decides what to do: (1) a good deal, (2) some, or (3) not much?

b. The Degree of Support for Two Features of the Constitution

To what extent do students support the constitutional rights that our government purports to guarantee? We sought to answer this question by asking students, first, to agree or disagree with the following:

> If a person wanted to make a speech in this community against churches and religion, he should be allowed to speak.

Agreement with this statement is presumed to reflect commitment to the notion of free speech despite the subject on which it is exercised. Table 8 reveals that more than four-fifths of the students hold this view. Variations across regions are minimal, though there is a modest difference between those anticipating attendance at college and those not. Not only are college aspirants more convinced of government's responsiveness to public opinion; in addition, they appear to be somewhat more supportive of its constitutional guarantees.

Table 8

A Person Should Have the Right to Speak
Against Churches and Religion

	Agree	Disagree	%
Nation	85.7	14.3	100
Region			
West	86.9	13.1	100
Midwest	87.5	12.5	100
Northeast	83.0	17.0	100
South	85.3	14.7	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	89.8	10.2	100
2 yr college	86.3	13.7	100
Trade School	82.6	17.4	100
No School	80.4	19.5	100
Your School			

A similar but perhaps more striking finding is revealed in the readiness of students to disagree with the following statement:

> If a communist were legally elected to some public office around here, the people should allow him to take office.

Surprisingly, seven-tenths of the national sample disagreed with this statement, thus reflecting a qualified commitment to the established norm of allowing the duly elected to assume the duties and responsibilities of office. Once again, regional differences are not particularly strong but the college and non-college bound remain clearly distinguished.

Table 9

Duly Elected Communists Have the Right to Take Office

	Agree	Disagree	%
Nation	28.7	71.3	100
Region			
West	30.3	69.7	100
Midwest	30.8	69.2	100
Northeast	27.0	73.0	100
South	26.8	73.2	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	39.2	60.8	100
2 yr college	29.2	70.8	100
Trade School	17.8	82.2	100
No School	17.7	82.3	100
Your School			

c. The Nature of Attachments to the Three Levels of American Government

Turning from constitutional guarantees to a different kind of political institution, what are the students' orientations to the three levels of political organization in the United States: the federal, state, and local forms of government? Table 10 reveals that in the nation as a whole, three quarters of all respondents have most faith and confidence in the federal government; that is, there is a decided tendency for students to feel more secure in and thus perhaps more supportive of the actions of the government in Washington, with the college bound slightly more positively oriented to the federal level than the non-college bound. Even in the South, where the doctrine of states' rights has been most articulated, approximately 70% of the students feel most faith and confidence in the national government.

Table 10

Level of Government in Which Faith and Confidence Is Highest

	Federal	State	Local	%
Nation	75.3	13.7	11.0	100
Region				
West	75.3	12.9	11.8	100
Midwest	76.2	12.1	11.7	100
Northeast	80.5	11.1	8.5	100
South	69.9	18.2	11.9	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	78.0	11.2	10.7	100
2 yr college	75.9	13.7	10.3	100
Trade School	71.6	16.1	12.2	100
No School	73.1	15.7	11.1	100
Your School				

We also asked our respondents to indicate the level of government in which they have the least faith and confidence; most, regardless of region or educational plans, chose the local government. Despite the fact that local government is "closest" to the public, students show a strong suspicion toward it.

Table 11

Level of Government in Which Faith and Confidence Is Lowest

	Federal	State	Local	%
Nation	14.7	26.0	59.3	100
Region				
West	15.3	29.4	55.3	100
Midwest	13.1	26.7	60.2	100
Northeast	11.0	23.7	65.3	100
South	19.6	25.3	55.1	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	13.6	29.0	57.4	100
2 yr college	14.5	27.2	58.3	100
Trade School	16.5	22.9	61.0	100
No School	15.5	23.0	61.5	100
Your School				

In addition to the level of government in which the individual has the most emotional support, we were also interested in the level of public affairs in which he has the greatest interest. Interest does not necessarily correspond with emotional support. High interest may reflect

a wish to scrutinize what are perceived to be the irregular activities of a particular level of government, a desire to understand the processes by which it works, or a concern about the issues with which it deals.

Each student was asked to state the order in which he prefers each of the following four types of political affairs: (1) local, (2) state, (3) national, and (4) international.

Table 12

Level of Public Affairs in Which Interest Is Highest[a]

	Local	State	National	International	%
Nation	18.2	4.9	29.1	47.8	100
Region					
West	14.3	4.5	26.7	54.5	100
Midwest	20.0	3.6	32.0	44.4	100
Northeast	19.7	3.8	26.0	50.5	100
South	16.6	7.5	30.4	45.5	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	12.5	3.4	32.2	51.9	100
2 yr college	16.7	4.7	27.0	51.6	100
Trade School	22.5	7.0	27.8	42.7	100
No School	26.5	5.8	25.3	42.4	100
Your School					

[a]The question was as follows: Put a 1 in the box beside the kind of public or current affairs you find most interesting, a 2 beside the second most interesting, a 3 beside the third most interesting and a 4 beside the one which is least interesting to you.

Tables 12 and 13 show the distribution for the first and fourth choices of our respondents respectively. Thus in Table 12, 18.2% of the national sample declare that they are most interested in local affairs; 4.9% said they are most interested in state affairs; 29.1% claim their highest interest is in national affairs; and 47.8% state that their highest interest is in international affairs.

Table 13

Level of Public Affairs in Which Interest Is Lowest

	Local	State	National	International	%
Nation	38.5	37.9	6.7	16.9	100
Region					
West	43.2	37.4	5.9	13.5	100
Midwest	35.1	40.6	6.3	18.0	100
Northeast	38.3	39.1	6.8	15.8	100
South	39.9	33.8	7.3	19.0	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	42.2	41.9	4.3	11.6	100
2 yr college	42.3	34.3	7.7	15.7	100
Trade School	36.2	32.7	8.7	22.4	100
No School	33.1	33.5	9.8	23.6	100
Your School					

Quite clearly, the political affairs of state government are of the least interest to students (only one in twenty of the national sample report a high interest) while international and national affairs (which fall under the "jurisdiction" of the federal government) are the objects of highest interest.

Variations across regions are not particularly high. However, students planning to attend college are much more interested in international and national affairs than the remaining students. This finding

reflects the presence of a "cosmopolitan" outlook among the college bound; that is, although all students have more faith and confidence in the federal government, those anticipating college have a broader world perspective--one which expands beyond the confines of the locale in which they have spent most of their youth.

d. Orientation to Federal Public Officials

Having demonstrated that students have most faith and confidence as well as most interest in the national, or federal level of the government, we now examine the orientation of students to public officials responsible for initiating and executing the activities of the government in Washington. In search of an answer, we examined responses to the following:

> Do you feel that almost all of the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing or do you think that quite a few of them don't seem to know what they are doing?

Table 14 demonstrates that more than three quarters of the students, regardless of region or educational goals, believe government officials are capable of adequately performing their tasks.

Faith in the ability of public officials does not necessarily imply trust of their actions and decisions. Thus, the students were also asked to declare the extent to which they trust the actions and decisions made

Table 14

How Many Government Officials Are Competent?[a]

	Most	Few	%
Nation	80.2	19.8	100
Region			
West	82.4	17.6	100
Midwest	81.1	18.9	100
Northeast	82.0	18.0	100
South	76.1	23.9	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	82.0	18.0	100
2 yr college	81.5	18.4	100
Trade School	78.5	21.5	100
No School	78.3	21.7	100
Your School			

[a]In this and the next three tables, student responses are based on reactions to government officials in Washington.

by federal government officials. In Table 15 we find that fewer than 10% of the national sample fail to trust the federal government to do what is right most of the time. Regional analysis reveals that in the South lack of trust is slightly more pronounced than in other regions. However, among students with different educational goals there is even less variation than that which occurs across regions.

Table 15

How Often Can the Government Be Trusted?[a]

	Always	Most of the Time	Sometimes	%
Nation	38.8	51.9	9.3	100
Region				
West	38.1	52.2	9.7	100
Midwest	40.7	51.5	7.7	100
Northeast	40.9	51.9	7.2	100
South	35.3	52.1	12.6	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	37.1	53.8	9.1	100
2 yr college	39.7	51.1	9.1	100
Trade School	40.2	50.9	8.9	100
No School	39.8	50.5	9.6	100
Your School				

[a]Students were asked: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right: (a) just about always, (b) most of the time, (c) only some of the time?

If students believe the decisions of public officials in Washington can be trusted and are performed with competence, do they also believe they have personal integrity. Respondents were asked:

> Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any are?

Most are unwilling to classify the vast majority of public officials as predominately honest or dishonest. While there is very little variation across students with different educational goals, regional analysis reveals again that students in Southern schools are somewhat more prone than those in other regions to regard public officials as lacking personal integrity.

Table 16

How Many Government People Are Crooked?

	Quite a Few	Not Very Many	Hardly Any	%
Nation	17.9	52.8	29.3	100
Region				
West	22.1	52.1	25.8	100
Midwest	20.0	55.8	24.2	100
Northeast	16.7	54.0	29.3	100
South	14.1	48.6	37.3	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	17.3	53.7	29.0	100
2 yr college	18.8	53.5	27.6	100
Trade School	18.4	51.4	30.2	100
No School	19.3	51.8	28.9	100
Your School				

When students were asked if they believe federal government officials are responsible in the handling of public money, most again choose the middle range alternative (Table 17). Variation across regions or types of educational plans are again quite small.

Table 17

How Much Money Does the Government Waste?[a]

	Not Very Much	Some	A Lot	%
Nation	11.6	54.8	33.8	100
Region				
West	12.0	52.4	35.6	100
Midwest	10.8	56.4	32.8	100
Northeast	11.7	56.8	31.6	100
South	12.3	52.6	35.0	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	10.8	56.1	33.0	100
2 yr college	11.4	54.3	34.3	100
Trade School	13.7	53.8	32.5	100
No School	11.9	53.0	35.1	100
Your School				

[a]The question was: Do you think that people in the government (in Washington) waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

e. Summary

In sum, it appears that although there is a decided confidence and interest in the actions and decisions on the federal level, a large portion of the students are emotionally committed to the political system as a whole. Moreover, most believe in the competence of public officials in Washington: few distrust their actions and decisions, few doubt their personal integrity, and most believe that public officials are only somewhat excessive in the spending of public funds. Where regional differences in these orientations appear, students in Southern schools are often clearly differentiated from others. But their points of departure are neither sharp nor "ideologically" consistent. Variation across educational goals, however, is another story; those anticipating attendance at college while less convinced of the "exportability" of the American political system believe more firmly in its responsiveness to public demands, are more supportive of its constitutional guarantees, more positively oriented to its national structures and more trusting of public officials than are those not planning to attend college. But the differences reflect relative degrees of positive regard for the American system and its institutions and actors. Whether these patterns or attitudes are naive and/or are likely to change when these students enter the political system as eligible voters cannot be easily determined. It is evident, however, that they represent a highly supportive and perhaps highly compliant segment of the population, firmly committed to the legitimacy of the institutions and formal actors in the political system. Recent indications of student unrest in both high schools and colleges

reflect possible cracks in this apparent consensus of support for the political system. Perhaps students having a generalized commitment to the political system are not completely satisfied with the specific ways in which policies relevant to their lives are handled.

II-2. Participative Orientations of High School Seniors.

If students feel strong positive emotions toward the political system, are they likely to become actively involved in political affairs after they attain full citizenship status (i.e., after they reach voting age)? We sought to answer this question by examining responses to questionnaire items designed to reflect the student's concept of a "good" citizen, his sense of understanding of and control over political affairs, his interest and concern about political life, and his expected level of political participation.

To explore the student's concept of the proper role of a good citizen, each respondent was asked to indicate which of the following best defined a "good citizen."

(1) He minds his own business
(2) He goes to church
(3) He is proud of his country
(4) He doesn't think he is better than other races, nationalities, or religions
(5) He votes in elections
(6) He obeys the laws

In Table 18, the response categories are presented from least to most frequently chosen. They may, however, be conceptually arranged from non-politically focused to politically focused. Quite clearly, the students' conception of a good citizen tends to be politically oriented, with 35% defining him as a voter and slightly over 38% defining him as one who obeys the laws. Notice that the passive orientation of obeying laws commands as much attention as the participative orientation of voting.

Table 18

Respondents' Concept of a Good Citizen[a]

	Minds his Own Business	Goes to Church	Proud of His Country	Not Think He Is Better Than Others	Votes	Obeys the Laws	%
Nation	0.6	2.0	11.1	13.2	35.0	38.1	100
Region							
West	0.9	1.4	10.9	13.6	35.0	38.3	100
Midwest	0.4	2.1	11.1	13.8	34.9	37.8	100
Northeast	0.5	1.7	12.1	15.0	33.4	37.5	100
South	0.8	2.4	10.7	10.9	36.7	38.8	100
Educational Plans							
4 yr college	0.5	1.7	10.9	11.5	35.7	39.7	100
2 yr college	0.6	1.8	12.0	13.0	36.3	36.3	100
Trade School	0.6	2.1	11.4	14.7	34.9	36.3	100
No School	1.0	2.0	10.8	15.5	32.6	38.0	100
Your School							

[a]Students were asked to choose three of the alternatives offered. Only the first response is reported in this table.

An individual's concept of a good citizen is probably associated with his sense of comprehension of the political process. Perhaps the relatively modest percentage of students defining the "good citizen" as an active participant in political life (i.e., a voter) stems from a feeling that the activities of government are beyond understanding and should simply be obeyed. To assess this possibility we examined responses to the following:

> Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.

More than two-thirds of the national sample (and more than two-thirds of the respondents in each of the four regions) expressed agreement with this statement. Those planning to attend either a two or a four year college, however, believe government is more incomprehensible than those whose educational aspirations are aimed somewhat lower.

Table 19

Government and Politics Are Often Beyond My Understanding

	Agree	Disagree	%
Nation	67.8	32.2	100
Region			
West	67.3	32.7	100
Midwest	68.1	31.9	100
Northeast	67.3	32.7	100
South	68.1	31.9	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	59.5	40.5	100
2 yr college	66.7	33.3	100
Trade School	74.4	25.6	100
No School	78.5	21.5	100
Your School			

Does a predominant lack of understanding of political affairs reflect a sense of powerlessness in influencing the actions of government? The answer appears to be a qualified no. When students were confronted with the statement, "My family doesn't have any say about what the government does," 86.2 percent of the national sample disagreed and similar distributions consistently appear in all four regions. However, students planning to attend college are somewhat more likely to disagree than those having no such plans.

Table 20

My Family Has No Say in the Decisions of Government

	Agree	Disagree	%
Nation	13.8	86.2	100
Region			
West	13.8	86.2	100
Midwest	13.0	87.0	100
Northeast	14.6	85.4	100
South	13.8	86.2	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	10.8	89.1	100
2 yr college	13.0	86.9	100
Trade School	16.0	84.0	100
No School	18.3	81.6	100
Your School			

A similar but more striking finding is revealed in responses to the following:

> Voting is the only way people like my mother and father can have any say about how the government runs things.

The majority of students (64.7 percent) disagree with this statement, thus providing further evidence that most students, despite their belief that political affairs are often beyond their understanding, do not feel limited in their ability to influence governmental decisions. While there is some variation across regions, with the students in Southern schools less likely to disagree than the rest, there is even more variation when students are compared according to their educational goals. College bound youth undeniably feel more powerful than the remaining respondents.

Table 21

My Parents Control Government Only by Voting

	Agree	Disagree	%
Nation	35.3	64.7	100
Region			
West	31.5	68.5	100
Midwest	34.6	65.4	100
Northeast	35.6	64.4	100
South	38.3	61.7	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	26.5	73.5	100
2 yr college	31.8	68.2	100
Trade School	44.2	55.8	100
No School	45.7	54.3	100
Your School			

Does a generally high sense of personal political influence reflect a strong interest in public affairs? Table 22 shows that students are not as a whole highly interested in public affairs. However, most claim to follow governmental and political events at least some of the time. It also appears that there is some variation across regions with the Northeast and South making up the lowest and the highest extremes respectively. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, we again find a clearcut difference between students anticipating college attendance and those not planning to continue their education.

Table 22

Frequency of Interest in Public Affairs

	Often	Sometimes	Now and Then	Seldom	%
Nation	32.7	44.0	18.6	4.7	100
Region					
West	30.7	43.7	20.0	5.9	100
Midwest	30.7	46.0	19.1	4.2	100
Northeast	29.4	43.8	20.7	6.1	100
South	39.7	42.0	15.2	3.2	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	42.8	41.9	13.0	2.2	100
2 yr college	30.7	45.7	18.8	4.7	100
Trade School	24.9	47.3	22.3	5.5	100
No School	20.6	42.6	27.2	9.6	100
Your School					

Whether this relatively high interest in political affairs is strongly associated with (a) the taking of social studies courses in high school or (b) frequent political discussions with family, friends, and adults cannot be directly determined in this report. But we have indirectly examined the importance of these factors in the high school senior's environment. For example, all students were asked how much they feel their social studies courses have increased their interest in public affairs and politics. Of those reporting they had taken such courses, more than 50 percent of the national sample claim that their impact was considerable. Again, the Northeast and South serve as the boundaries for the lowest and highest extremes and there continues to be a marked difference between those anticipating college attendance and those who do not.

Table 23

Amount of Impact of Social Studies Courses on Political Interest[a]

	A Good Deal	Some	Not Much	%
Nation	52.3	38.6	9.1	100
Region				
West	52.1	38.7	9.2	100
Midwest	49.8	40.5	9.7	100
Northeast	46.1	42.9	11.0	100
South	60.7	32.6	6.7	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	57.1	35.5	7.4	100
2 yr college	53.7	38.0	8.3	100
Trade School	49.3	40.8	9.9	100
No School	41.7	44.9	13.4	100
Your School				

[a]See Section I, page 3 for the types of courses included under this heading.

The question on which these distributions are based is as follows:

> How much did the (social studies) course(s) increase your interest in things like public affairs and politics?

Approximately 12.5% of the sample had never taken a social studies course. These people could not, of course, be included in the above table.

It will be remembered that in Part I we showed that for the population as a whole, the relationship between taking civics courses and holding certain political attitudes and values is quite weak. The above table does not necessarily contradict this conclusion though it does demand its elaboration. First, while it appears that students tend to subjectively believe their experiences in social studies courses have awakened an interest in public affairs, in fact, they may not have substantially altered such behavior as the reading of newspapers and political magazines. Thus the subjective impact of courses may overestimate its objective impact. Second, and perhaps more important, even if the courses do affect political interest, they may have few ramifications beyond this. It is certainly possible that if students were asked to assess the impact of social studies courses on other political orientations (i.e., tolerance, cynicism, etc.) the distributions in Table 23 might be reversed.

Of course, we must eventually test these possibilities before making claims for their validity. Our purpose in raising them is to point out the hazards in a facile interpretation of the findings in Table 23. Nevertheless, the table does suggest that most students are willing to attribute at least some of their interest in public affairs and politics to their experiences in formal coursework.

When respondents were asked to state whether or not they talk about current events, public affairs, and politics at home or with friends and/or adults (other than teachers and members of the family) responses revealed that politically centered discussion is most common in the family setting and least common with adults outside the home or school. In no case are variations across regions sharply different, but in all cases the college bound are consistently more likely to engage in political conversation with others than are the remaining respondents.

Table 24

Amount of Political Conversation with Family[a]

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	%
Nation	37.4	43.2	12.9	6.5	100
Region					
West	38.1	43.9	11.6	6.3	100
Midwest	36.1	44.7	13.4	5.8	100
Northeast	34.1	42.5	14.3	9.0	100
South	41.4	41.6	11.8	5.2	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	44.1	42.5	9.5	3.9	100
2 yr college	40.2	42.5	11.9	5.4	100
Trade School	32.2	45.2	15.1	7.5	100
No School	25.3	44.6	18.2	11.8	100
Your School					

[a]The question asked was: How often do you talk about current events, public affairs and politics with the members of your family?

Table 25

Amount of Political Conversation with Friends

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	%
Nation	30.5	46.4	15.3	7.8	100
Region					
West	32.5	46.0	15.1	6.3	100
Midwest	30.0	42.4	15.0	7.7	100
Northeast	26.7	44.9	17.3	11.3	100
South	33.4	47.3	13.8	5.5	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	38.3	46.9	10.9	3.9	100
2 yr college	33.4	47.1	13.5	6.0	100
Trade School	22.2	47.8	20.0	10.0	100
No School	20.6	43.4	21.7	14.3	100
Your School					

Table 26

Amount of Political Conversation with Adults

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	%
Nation	13.4	37.8	28.1	20.7	100
Region					
West	11.7	38.8	29.1	20.3	100
Midwest	13.4	37.4	28.6	20.8	100
Northeast	12.0	36.6	26.8	24.6	100
South	15.7	38.9	28.2	17.2	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	13.4	41.2	29.0	16.3	100
2 yr college	14.1	39.0	28.9	17.9	100
Trade School	13.6	36.9	26.4	23.1	100
No School	10.5	31.3	27.6	30.6	100
Your School					

A general interest in and frequency of discussions about public affairs is not the same as actual political participation or activity. And often the link between attitudinal orientation and actual behavior is tenuous and indirect. Of course, few if any of our respondents had, at the time the questionnaire was administered, already actively engaged in political affairs. However, we sought to measure their expected level of general political participation as well as their eagerness to "have a say" in political affairs.

The expected level of political participation was measured by the following question:

> Looking ahead to the time when you are on your own, what about actual participation in public affairs and politics? How active do you think you will be in these matters: (1) very active, (2) somewhat active, (3) not very active?

As might be expected, those planning to enter college upon graduation from high school are more likely to anticipate high political activity than the other respondents. Nevertheless, regardless of the regional location of the high school or varying educational plans, relatively few anticipate highly active involvement in political life. This corresponds with the small proportion of students that do not find government beyond understanding. Perhaps even this self projection into the individual's adult life suffers from over-estimation and may be subject to change when the actual opportunities for participation become more available.

Table 27

Amount of Anticipated Political Activity

	Very Active	Somewhat Active	Not Very Active	%
Nation	10.7	59.2	30.1	100
Region				
West	10.5	55.6	33.9	100
Midwest	11.0	60.1	28.8	100
Northeast	8.9	56.8	34.5	100
South	12.3	62.3	25.3	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	16.3	60.6	23.1	100
2 yr college	10.0	58.8	31.2	100
Trade School	9.0	57.7	33.3	100
No School	6.0	52.3	41.7	100
Your School				

When students were asked if they believe 18 year olds should be allowed to vote, about half responded affirmatively. This finding may at first be surprising since one might well expect the great majority of high

school seniors to favor their own enfranchisement. Despite the teenagers' frequent insistence that they be treated as adults, it is apparent that about half of them do not trust the extension of the suffrage to their peers. In a preliminary investigation we discovered that the reasons for opposition lay mainly in the belief that eighteen-year olds are too immature--they have not had enough time to form sound political judgments, they may have the facts but lack the perspectives, they do not have enough experience, or they are simply not "old" enough.

Since two Southern states already permit 18 year olds to vote, it is not surprising that students in this region are most likely to respond positively to the question. Curiously, however, those not anticipating college attendance are slightly more likely to support the right of 18 year olds to vote than those planning to attend college. This may reflect their recognition of a transition point in their life from school to work and a concommitant desire to partake of adult privileges.

Table 28

Should 18 Year Olds Vote?

	Yes	No	%
Nation	51.7	48.3	100
Region			
West	45.9	54.1	100
Midwest	51.8	48.2	100
Northeast	48.0	52.0	100
South	58.7	41.3	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	49.3	50.8	100
2 yr college	49.1	50.9	100
Trade School	54.6	45.4	100
No School	53.6	46.4	100
Your School	52		

II-3. Substantive Political Orientations.

Thus far we have considered two fundamental dimensions of the high school senior's orientation to the political world: the affective and the procedural. We now turn to two substantively focussed aspects of political dispositions.

First, what is the partisan coloration of American high school seniors? Table 29 reveals responses to the following question:

> Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Table 29

Respondents' Political Party Identification

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	%
Nation	22.0	42.7	35.3	100
Region				
West	22.5	40.5	37.0	100
Midwest	24.2	38.6	37.2	100
Northeast	22.0	43.2	34.8	100
South	19.2	48.3	32.5	100
Educational Plans				
4 yr college	27.3	37.5	35.0	100
2 yr college	21.9	41.4	36.5	100
Trade School	16.7	47.7	35.3	100
No School	17.2	48.2	34.5	100
Your School				

While we shall be able to explore only superficially the roots of declared partisan attachment, the above table clearly reveals the predominance of commitment to the Democratic party. As might be expected, the proportion who are Democrats is highest in the South and lowest in the Midwest. That students planning to attend college are more prone than others to have a Republican party identification suggests, as we noted earlier, that they are of middle to upper socio-economic status.

Does the predominantly Democratic pattern among students correspond with the party identification pattern among their parents? Each student was asked to state the party identification of his mother and his father. Tables 30 and 31 reveal not only that the mothers and fathers are quite similar in party affiliation; in addition the predominance of Democrats parallels the student's report of his own partisan identification reported in Table 29. The pattern of differences across regions and types of educational goals found earlier remains.

Table 30

Political Party Identification of Respondents' Fathers

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Not Sure	%
Nation	29.7	49.8	13.2	7.3	100
Region					
West	30.2	50.9	12.6	6.3	100
Midwest	33.5	44.9	14.7	6.9	100
Northeast	33.0	45.9	12.7	8.3	100
South	22.2	58.2	12.2	7.5	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	35.8	44.2	15.1	4.9	100
2 yr college	30.2	49.9	13.1	6.7	100
Trade School	22.7	56.7	11.9	8.7	100
No School	24.9	54.0	10.1	11.1	100
Your School					

Table 31

Political Party Identification of Respondents' Mothers

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Not Sure	%
Nation	30.1	48.6	13.9	7.4	100
Region					
West	32.4	49.1	12.7	5.8	100
Midwest	34.1	43.0	15.8	7.1	100
Northeast	32.5	45.6	13.8	8.1	100
South	22.0	57.3	12.5	8.2	100
Educational Plans					
4 yr college	36.1	43.4	15.3	5.2	100
2 yr college	30.2	49.4	13.9	6.5	100
Trade School	23.6	54.6	13.0	8.8	100
No School	26.0	52.0	11.2	10.8	100
Your School					

What is strikingly different is that a student is nearly three times more likely to declare that he is politically Independent than he is to say that his father and/or mother is an Independent. A number of factors may account for the apparently weaker partisanship of the students. For example, students lack their parents' long experiences as active citizens and though they can presumably identify their parents' political affiliation, they have failed as yet to develop a similar in-depth feeling about American political parties. There are undoubtedly specific forces pushing the students toward being Independents. The experience of an ever-widening environment and the gradual withdrawal of parental power may encourage some students to develop political "neutrality." The efforts of schools and of teachers in particular

are probably weighted in the same direction even if teachers often try to refrain from openly discussing politics. If these forces are at work, it suggests that many high school students may be gradually withdrawing from an earlier position of more overt partisanship.

Students were also asked to specify whether the party identification of most of their friends is (a) Republican, (b) Democratic, (c) about half Republican and half Democratic, (d) mostly Independent, or (e) not sure what they are. Table 32 reveals that students do not necessarily perceive their friendship groups to be homogeneous in party identification: 28.6 percent reported that half their friends are Republicans and half Democrats. Moreover, the high percentage of those not sure of their friends' party identification probably reflects the low salience of politics for the respondents and/or his friends. Quite likely, such things as common academic interests and curricular and extracurricular interaction are most important in the formation of friendship groups; apparently partisan identification is not a particularly important criteria. The presence of the "not sure" option probably accounts for the low proportion of students reporting that their friends are Independent. That students are more likely to perceive their friends as Democratic rather than Republican reflects the fact that more students are, in fact, Democratic identifiers.

Table 32

Political Party Identification of Respondents' Friends

	Republican	Democrat	1/2 R 1/2 D	Independent	Not Sure	%
Nation	9.2	24.6	28.2	5.9	32.1	100
Region						
West	6.8	22.9	32.7	5.8	31.8	100
Midwest	13.5	21.9	29.2	6.5	29.0	100
Northeast	8.2	22.3	25.8	5.3	38.2	100
South	6.8	30.9	26.3	5.9	30.1	100
Educational Plans						
4 yr college	12.7	23.5	32.2	5.8	25.8	100
2 yr college	8.3	24.1	29.6	5.4	32.6	100
Trade School	5.7	26.6	25.3	6.2	36.2	100
No School	5.7	24.4	23.5	6.1	40.3	100
Your School						

Notice that when students with different educational plans are compared, those with higher educational aspirations are more likely to perceive their friends as Republicans. This is understandable since Republican identifications are more prevalent in the ranks of these students; it also serves as further evidence that students tend to interact more with peers having experienced similar curriculum programs and/or having similar life plans. Moreover, these students are more prone to perceive their friends as mixed in their party identification. There may be less need for homogeneous friendship groups and at the same time greater saliency of politics for these students.

Students were also asked whether they would have voted for Johnson or Goldwater in the 1964 election. The national totals for students choosing Johnson is 11.0 percent higher than the 61.2 that Johnson actually received

in the election that took place five months earlier. This inflation is predictable since there is a well known tendency for people to say they would have voted for someone who has already been victorious. However, the group most closely approaching the actual division of the vote are those planning to attend a four year college; those deviating the most are students planning to attend either business and trade school or no school at all. This is particularly interesting since the college bound would probably have been more likely than the rest of the sample to have voted if given the chance.

Table 33

1964 Presidential Choice

	Johnson	Goldwater	%
Nation	71.1	28.9	100
Region			
West	71.6	28.4	100
Midwest	74.1	25.9	100
Northeast	76.8	23.2	100
South	62.4	37.6	100
Educational Plans			
4 yr college	63.6	36.4	100
2 yr college	69.9	30.1	100
Trade School	80.1	19.9	100
No School	79.9	20.1	100
Your School			

Having explored a few aspects of our respondents' party identification and election preferences, we now turn to a somewhat different dimension of their substantive political orientations: What kinds of political issues do they consider most important? More specifically where do they feel the government must place emphasis to improve the nation. Respondents were asked to declare which of the following issue areas make him <u>least</u> proud to be an American:

(1) People are out for themselves; they don't care about others
(2) Prejudice and discrimination against minorities
(3) The lack of interest in public affairs
(4) The way other countries take advantage of us
(5) Some of the "dirty politics" in the government
(6) Slums and poverty

Table 34

Why Least Proud of the United States[a]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	%
Nation	8.0	8.7	9.8	16.6	22.2	34.7	100
Region							
West	9.9	10.9	11.1	16.3	20.3	32.3	100
Midwest	9.0	9.2	9.2	14.5	22.3	35.9	100
Northeast	7.3	8.9	8.3	16.1	22.9	36.7	100
South	6.4	6.6	11.2	19.9	22.5	33.3	100
Educational Plans							
4 yr college	8.1	10.9	11.8	16.5	21.5	31.2	100
2 yr college	7.8	9.1	10.8	17.8	20.5	34.0	100
Trade School	7.8	7.0	7.8	15.0	23.6	38.8	100
No School	8.4	6.8	6.9	16.8	22.7	38.4	100
Your School							

[a]Students were asked to choose three of the alternatives offered. Only the first response is reported in this table.

Responses to this question reflect some of the social concerns of mid-century youth as they enter late adolescence. Table 34 reveals that the bulk of the sample is most concerned with one of the burning domestic issues of the 1960's--slums and poverty. Viet Nam has undoubtedly become of considerable importance during the past three years but our study was conducted before the issue became particularly salient and thus was not included in the list of alternatives. Two-thirds of the sample chose depersonalized issues: (1) attitudes of other countries (16.6%), (2) government procedures (22.2%), and social deprivation (34.7%). Other researchers have found that while this is contrary to the pattern found in younger adolescents (i.e., below age 15) it does correspond quite closely with the adult population and may be regarded as evidence for the gradual development of political sophistication.

CONCLUSION:

As we pointed out earlier, this report is designed only as an initial sketch of some of the political attitudes and values of American high school seniors at a particular point in historical time and at a single stage in their political development. We hope that your awareness of a few of the politically relevant characteristics of the senior class in your school may assist your understanding of the nature of their political orientations. Caution should be invoked in attempting to use the above findings to infer cause-effect relationships. Our intention has been primarily to describe rather than explain and at the same time to provide you with national and regional pictures for purposes of comparison.

We expect to continue working with the data gathered and hope to delineate more thoroughly the texture of adolescent political orientations and the sources of their variation.

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